

3.00pm: The interplay of language and identity of Georgian students in Moscow

Denis Zubalov, Higher School of Economics (Moscow)

The rise in numbers of migrants across the globe over the last couple of decades is not solely driven by the lack of economic opportunities. Moscow being the one of the most influential financial centres in the post-Soviet space, has been attracting migrants of different ethnic and linguistic background over the last two decades. Despite the fact that the so-called 'post-Soviet migrants', including school-aged migrants, are treated differently in Moscow based on the level of proficiency in the Russian language, the Russian capital-city is trying to provide equal educational opportunities by integrating 'heritage' language lessons for migrant children into the school programme as an elective subject. In this paper, I am going to examine the role of homeland and language in the process identity construction by adolescent Georgian migrant students in the Moscow secondary school with a Georgian ethno-cultural component. More specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions: 1. How do Georgian teenage students conceptualize the notion of homeland and mother tongue, and how their emotional attachment to these (or lack thereof) can influence their identity construction; 2. What role does the school play in the formation of Georgian cultural and ethnic identity?

3.30pm: "A freedom, which doesn't exist in Europe" – negotiating images of "Germany" and "Europe" in the post-Soviet German diaspora

Concha Maria Höfler, Durham University

What does it mean to "be German" if one has never lived in Germany but for generations in a space that is today labelled "post-Soviet"? And what does "Germany" stand for when contrasted, for instance, with the experiences of everyday life in Kazakhstan? Drawing on 58 interviews with self-identifying Germans in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, and Western Siberia, this talk explores the conversational establishment of "Germany" and "Europe" in contrast to the "here" of the interview situation. The emerging complexity of images, affects, and relations allows a first glimpse into how "being German" is positioned in relation to other contextually relevant identifications.

4.00pm: General Discussion

The event is organised as part of a large interdisciplinary research programme, 'Cross-Language Dynamics: Reshaping Community', funded through the AHRC's Open World Research Initiative:

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For further information about the event, please contact Polina Kliuchnikova at

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More on the Language & Identity in Post-Soviet Spaces event series:

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